
Mr. OFFLEY's
FAST-SERMON,

JANUARY 19th. 1704.

Upon the late Great WINDS.

The Power and Privilege of God
Conferred on the Kings

SEAL

OF THE

WINDWARD ISLANDS

IN THE COUNTY OF



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OF THE

WINDWARD ISLANDS

IN THE COUNTY OF

Y

169
N^o 6.
*The Power and Providence of God
Consider'd and Asserted.*

I N A
S E R M O N

Preach'd in the Parish-Church

O F

MIDDLETON-STONY,
in the County of *Oxford,*

On *Wednesday* the 19th of *January*, 1701.

Being the

F A S T - D A Y

Appointed by Proclamation to be observed in a most
Solemn and Devout Manner, &c.

By *WILLIAM OFFLEY*, M. A.
Prebendary of *Lincoln*, Rector of *Middleton-Stony*, and
late Fellow of *King's-College* in *Cambridge*.

L O N D O N :

Printed for *W. Rogers*, at the *Sun* against *St. Dunstan's*
Church in *Fleetstreet*. MDCCIV.

TO THE
Right Reverend Father in GOD,
WILLIAM,
Lord Bishop of *Oxford.*

My LORD,

SINCE your constant Attendance in Parliament, does so unavoidably oblige you to be for some time absent from your Diocese ; I thought it might be an acceptable Instance of that Duty and Service I owe to my Diocesan, at this distance to acquaint your Lordship , That in Obedience to Her Sacred Majesty's Command, the late appointed Fast was Solemnly and Religiously observ'd by your Cler-

THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

gy, and the People of their Respective Parishes in general : And how the same has been in particular Solemniz'd here, I humbly hope the ensuing Sermon may in some measure satisfy your Lordship, whose favourable Acceptance I presume to beg ; Who am,

My LORD,

Middleton-Stony,
Jan. 29th. 170 $\frac{1}{2}$.

Your most

Obedient Servant,

WILL. OFFLEY.

TO

TO THE
INHABITANTS
OF THE
PARISH
OF
MIDDLETON-STONY.

Having for some considerable Time been Resident among You, and observ'd your Religious Constancy and Disposition to frequent God's Holy Church, and upon all suitable Occasions, to wait upon Him in his most Sacred Ordinances; I could not but Publish it in this Manner to your Commendation, as well as to my own particular Satisfaction; who have had (upwards of Fourteen Years) the Great Care of your Souls Episcopally committed to me. And since it is My indispensable Duty to Watch for your Souls, as He that must one Day give an Account; I shall ever labour to promote such Holy Offices of Piety and Charity, that your Love towards God, and one another, may for ever flourish and abound. It was not without some Concern that I saw many of you under such Fears and Disorders, whilst you were Assembled together in the Church, upon

Heb. 13.
ver. 17-
the

the Day of the appointed Fast ; when the Terrible Noise and Violence of the Wind prevented, not only you that were then present from hearing Divine Service, and giving your wonted Attention to God's most Holy Word, but likewise kept many Aged Persons at Home, who durst not venture out, as they intended before the Storm arose, to Joyn with us in the Publick and Solemn Exercise of Fasting and Humiliation. Upon this Account I have Publish'd this Plain Discourse, that you may Read over and consider that which you could not hear so distinctly Deliver'd for your Edification : And I Beseech God, That it may have the blessed Effect of raising your Hearts and Minds , to a constant and serious Acknowledgement of God Almighty's Power and Providence for ever and ever.

I am

Middleton-Stony

Jan. 29th. 1703.

Your assured Friend,

William Offley.

The

The Power and Providence of God Consider'd and Asserted, &c.

PSALM 148. Ver. the 8th. the last part. ‡

-----Stormy Wind fulfilling his Word.

NOT many Years are gone by, since God was moved to Arise in Judgment, and Afflict this Nation of ours, as He has lately done, by a very terrible *Blast of his Wrath, Anger and Displeasure.*

But the *Great Wind*, which * then blow'd so furiously on the Earth, tho' it was for some time dreadful, yet the Terrors which we then were fill'd with, were not so astonishing; nor the Loss we then sustain'd, comparable to that which our *unhappy Nation* now groans under; having felt the saddest Effects of God's Afflicting Providence, in the late mighty † Storm and Tempest. ‡ Nov. 26, 27. 1703.

God knows, had we, the sinful People of this Kingdom, been so well dispos'd, as to have made a Religious Use of that *Warning Stroke* which was given us at the first, when the *Stormy Wind* fulfill'd God's Command, and punish'd us severely; It might possibly have prov'd the happy Instrument to have warded off this *second Blow*, and inclin'd our God to have spared his People, and not given them over to the Rage and Violence of a *Merciless Wind.*

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By

By some Accounts heretofore given, we understand, That the Earth only was expos'd to the Fury of the former *Great Wind*; but in this last, and most *Violent Storm*, the saddest Relations of Misery and Desolation have been transmitted from many parts of this Kingdom; and we are severely convinc'd, that both the *Land and Sea* have been Shaken and Toss'd together. How are many of our Countrymen and Friends fallen! How are many ancient Buildings, which had stood the Shock of several Ages, o'return'd and levell'd with the ground! The *Stately Ruins* only serving as *Monuments* to the Memory of those who were so unfortunate, as to meet *Death* in the late *Storm*; and are now number'd amongst the *Slain, who were Kill'd by the downfal of their respective Habitations*.

How are the *Mighty* fallen! How have many of our *Brave Commanders by Sea*, together with many able and *Skilful Sailors*, perish'd in the devouring Deep! Whilst many noble *Ships of War* have been *Wreck'd and Stow'd in pieces*, as so many *Floating Remains of part of our English Strength and Glory*.

Come near then, and bearken, Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, see, and seriously consider: Was ever Sorrow like to this Sorrow, which we of this Nation undergo? What Native of this Realm, whose Heart is entirely *Christian*, as well as *English*, can in this Day of *Humiliation and Fasting*, be cold or careless in his Devotions? Can our Bowels of tenderness and compassion now fail, when so many *Widows and Fatherless* are left to make Lamentation in our *Israel*?

Howsoever some loose, unthinking Men, in their Passions and Prejudice may be hurried away, and regardlessly pass over these late Judgments, which have befall'n a Nation in a very surprizing Manner; yet 'tis to be hoped, that as many as are here present, have du-

duly Prepared their Hearts aright to seek the Lord in this appointed Day, and with * *Fasting and with Weeping, and with Mourning, to Turn now even to the Lord our God: For he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.* Joel 2. 12. Ver. 13.

Tho' God in Anger hath smitten the Inhabitants of this Nation, He will, upon their hearty Repentance, heal them again: Let none of us then, in the least faint in this Time of Tryal, nor Distrust the mighty Power of God to Salvation; But in consideration of God's great and gracious Works, now confess with the Royal Psalmist, That God doeth wonders: and has declar'd his strength among the People: *The Waters saw thee, O God, the Waters saw thee: They were afraid; the Depths also were troubled. The clouds poured out Water, the Skies sent out a sound: thine Arrows also went abroad, the voice of thy Thunder was in the Heaven: the Lightnings lightned the World, the Earth trembled and shook. Thy way is in the Sea, and thy path in the great Waters, and thy footsteps are not known.* Psal. 77. 7. 14, 16, 17, 18, 19.

So great and stupendious are the Works of God! how terrible are his Judgments which he sends amongst the Children of Men? These all call daily upon us, to consider, why, and to what end they are sent: And God grant we may all seriously at this time apply them, lest God again cause the Wind of his Fury to arise to its former height, and finally accomplish that ruin and destruction, which is already begun amongst his Creatures; As the Prophet speaks. The Sacred Scriptures in many places, alike express how unwilling God is, that any of the Sons of Men shou'd come to such fearful ends, as to be suddenly destroy'd by Death. Ezek. 18. 32.

And to awaken us the more to a Sense of our present Duty, that we in particular might not remain careless and negligent in the performance of that most Reasonable

nable Service which we owe to God at all times, but more especially at such a time as this, when we have receiv'd so many Melancholy Instances of his Power and Providence; God has been Graciously Pleas'd to direct the "Heart and Mind of his Anointed Vicegerent, "our Sovereign Lady the Queen, To enjoyn this Solemn "Fast, that the whole Land might at one and the same "time Mourn for Publick Provocations, and depre- "cate future Judgments: And not only so, But God

* The Wind was extremely High upon the Fast Day, and Blew up the Leads of this Church in time of Divine Service; so that a great part of the Congregation left their Seats, and retir'd into the Chancel, in great Consternation.

Psal. 79. ver. 8 & 9.

himself also seems more immediately to Summon us up to the Holy Duties of this Day, by reminding us of our late Miseries and Troubles; whilst at this very * Moment He causeth the West Wind to blow very Furiously again upon us. Oh! that our Repentance then, and Humiliation, might have such a Blessed Effect at this time, as to prevail with God to Arise and Rebuke the Wind, that there may be a Calm; that Destruction may no longer continue in this terrible Manner to Threaten the Earth, and Terrify us that are here more immediately Assembled together in God's Sanctuary to call upon his Name, which is Great, Wonderful, and Holy. "O God, hear us, "and Remember not against us former Iniquities, or the "Iniquities of them that were before us: Let thy "tender Mercies speedily Prevent us, for we are "brought very Low. Help us, O God of our Salva- "tion, for the Glory of thy Name; and deliver us, "and purge away our Sins for thy Name's sake.

Psal. 119. ver. 137.

Psal. 46. ver. 2.

"O let not the Lord be Angry! and we will once "more beg of thee to spare thy People, and let thine "Anger cease from us: We acknowledge, O Lord, That "the Stormy Wind hath fulfill'd thy Word; Righteous art "Thou in all thy Ways, and Holy in all thy Works: Where- "fore we will continue to Praise Thee, and will not fear "any longer, Though the Earth be remov'd, and though the "Hills shou'd be carried into the midst of the Sea; For none

"ever

“ ever that trusted in Thee have been Confounded. This was Pious *David's* Confidence in the days of his Sorrows and Sufferings; and it serves to keep us all at this Day from distrusting the Providence of God; and in the midst of Judgments, thus quietly to stay in *this House of Prayer*, and implore the Mercy of the *Almighty*, “ That all this Wind, and all these Storms, which “ now blow under Heaven, may go over us, and not “ leave any fresh Marks of Ruin behind them, either “ upon Us, or our Substance in particular; or upon this “ Nation in general: *Lord hear our Prayer, and let our Cry now come unto thee.*

Psal. 34. ver. 22.

Upon all Occasions, we find the Prophet *David* was Religiously dispos'd to Address the Throne of God's Divine Majesty with Prayer and Supplication: And we may throughout all his Sacred Hymns, perceive that his chiefest Delight, was to have the Consideration of *God's Power and Providence* always in his Thoughts, whilst the Praises of God were in his Mouth: Thus in this, and the preceeding *Psalms* of my Text, he calls upon all Creatures with him to Celebrate God's Praise, and Magnify that Almighty Power which presides over the whole World: In the first part of this Divine Song, Celestial Bodies, *The Heavens, Angels, and all the Stars of Light*, are exhorted to Praise God; the like is afterwards enforced upon Terrestrial Beings, such as *Dragons, Deeps, Fire and Hail, Snow and Vapour, and stormy Wind*. Now that these Creatures, void of Reason and Elocution, should be exhorted to perform the duty of Praise, and declared to *fulfill God's Word*, may seem strange perhaps, and no less than a Paradox to those who do not consider; That the *Psalmist's* Exhortation here, is only more and more to stir up and provoke Rational Beings, who want neither Tongues nor Language, to Praise God. Thus when the Prophet elsewhere men-

Ver. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

Ver. 7, 8, 9, 10.

tions;

Psal. 19. 1.

tions, *That the Heavens Declare the Glory of God*, he wou'd have us understand nothing more by that Expression, but that the Heavens, and all that beautiful Frame and Order which is seen to be resident in the Works of God's Creation, are as so many Notices of *God's Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, which are essential to him*: For whilst we all look up, and contemplate the Rule and Order of those glorious Bodies which are above, what due measures and certainty they keep in their several courses and operations; we cannot rationally infer, that ever such harmony and agreement shou'd commence, and be produced by *any Blind, and meerly natural Cause*, which is wholly incapable of such exact Number and Order: But we must Attribute all this to a *more sublime and All-seeing Cause, which is God blessed for ever*; Who in his Infinite Wisdom hath ordain'd all things, not only for our Admiration, but for his own peculiar Glory also; and by the Creatures which he hath made and created, both his Mercy in saving, and his Justice in punishing of us at all times is evidenc'd, when he is pleas'd to make use of them upon either account. *Fire and Hail, Snow and Vapour, Stormy Wind*; yea, all God's Creatures shew his Power and Glory, whenever he thinks fit to call them forth, and employ them in the Earth: And when these "*Me-*"
 "*teors, which are observ'd to arise suddenly and with*"
 "*great Vehemence to spend themselves*", do bring ruin and destruction upon us; we ought to impute the fatal Calamity to our Sins, which have produc'd such amazing effects of God's Wrath amongst us.

" 'Tis granted, That private Misfortunes do often
 " happen to particular Men, and are not at all times
 " intended for the Scourge and Punishment of Sin;
 " neither are they such Infallible Symptoms of the
 " Wrath

“ Wrath of God against those that they fall upon : But when a whole Kingdom is Alarm’d with the Noise and Terribleness of a *mighty striving Wind*; and unusual and distracting Fears almost possess every Soul, lest they shou’d fall and perish at every Blast, and be hurried away into the Regions of Death and Darknes; when Judgments thus dreadfully flie through a Nation, we cannot but conclude that God is solemnly Angry, and that the *Stormy Wind* by his particular appointment and sufferance *has fulfill’d his Word*.

In Discourfing on which words of the *Pfalmist*, I shall endeavour in the *First* place to remind you of those Duties of Religion, which at present we all stand engag’d to discharge; since the Stormy Wind hath so lately fulfill’d God’s Word (his Resolution) to punish us in so dreadful a manner.

I.

Secondly, From this Consideration of God’s Inferior Creatures fulfilling his Commands, as they are directed at all times, I shall exhort you to the like practice of holy and heavenly Obedience in all fuitable Opportunities, by doing of such things as God requires to be done.

II.

I. As to the former of these, It is most certain That the design of God’s Judgments is to bring Sinners to Repentance, and awaken Mens Consciences to learn and return to their Duty; That what is spoken of by *Isaiah* might be verified: *When Thy Judgments, O Lord, are in the Earth, the inhabitants of the World will learn Righteousness.* A blessed effect it is of God’s Judgments, when we all, *that have erred and stray’d from God’s ways*, and have been remiss and careless in Prosperity, are better’d, and made wiser by Afflictions: To this *David*

Isa. 26. 9.

vid long since subscrib'd, when he confess'd, *That it was good for him that he had been afflicted, that he might learn God's Statutes.* But there are some Wicked and Licentious Persons, who remain stupid and incorrigible under all the Instances of God's Power and Providence: Neither Mercy in forbearing, nor Terror of Punishment, do at any season influence the Mind of the Obdurate and harden'd Sinner: For as the Prophet describes him, *Let favour be shewed to the Wicked, yet will he not learn Righteousness; in the land of Uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the Majesty of the Lord:* And when God's Hand (his Judgment) is lifted up, the Wicked will not see: Yet all they that weigh and consider the Works of Providence as they ought, are not only taught Righteousness by Afflictions, but upon all occasions they are willing to learn it. The Duties therefore which at present do principally oblige us, are these that follow.

- I. *First*, That we do upon all Emergencies readily acknowledge *God's Supream Authority and Providence*, which he hath over all Things in the World.
- II. *Secondly*, That when God is pleas'd, either by himself, or to concur with *Second Causes*, enabling them to punish us with the fiercest execution of his Wrath here below, we take it patiently, and not Murmur against God.
- III. *Thirdly*, That when Judgments have been sent amongst us, which have destroyed many Creatures *in the Land and in the Sea*, we that in this Day survive, do never forget to bless the Name of God for our happy Deliverance.

1. I Begin with this Duty, That we do upon all Emergencies readily Acknowledge God's *Supreme Authority and Providence*, which he hath over all things in the World. And truly this is a Duty, not only of great Obligation, but very necessary to be enforced, if we reflect on the Reasonableness of our discharging it our selves, and the Baseness of all those, who dare to oppose and deny it. Our own particular obligation to yield Obedience to God's Divine Sanctions, and acknowledge his Power, is soon discover'd, if we do but cast an eye back, and look upon our first *Original and Extraction; The Dust, and Clay, and Earth*, which God Animated, and Inspired with Life and Motion: Of this *David* informs the Careless, and the Ignorant Ones, in this manner: *Know ye that the Lord he is God, It is He that hath made us, and not we our selves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.* In the Lord *Jehovah* is Everlasting Strength; as speaks the Evangelical Prophet. And though we cannot presume to make any daring Enquiries into the great Mysteries of Religion; nor are we able to comprehend in our finite Capacities, *What is the Height or Depth of God's unsearchable Goodness and Power*: Yet we are enabled by the guidance and assistance of Moral Duties, and Revealed Truths, to discover some clear Notices of God and Providence; How that he is *All-sufficient*, and that nothing less than *Majesty, Dominion, and Strength Everlasting*, are Divine Properties peculiar to God, and Essential to his *Divine Nature and Godhead*.

Among all the Sacred and distinguishing Names and Titles, which the Holy Ghost, both in the Old and New Testament, hath given to God; *The Lord Jehovah* is interpreted by the most Learned Comments, very emphatically and significantly to express the transcendent Excellency of God's Majesty, and that unchange-

able Constancy which dwells with God for ever and ever. It imports his Being in and of himself, and giving Life and Birth to all his Creatures; *The Everlasting, Unchangeable, and Omnipotent God*. If at your leisure you Read over the 95th. Psalm, you'll find it a Divine and Noble Paraphrase upon God Almighty's Power and Providence: And to Imprint an Acknowledgment of it the Deeper upon our Minds, our *Holy Church* has appointed that *Hymn*, to Celebrate God's Praise withal, at every Return of *Morning Prayer*; when we are call'd upon, *To Sing unto the Lord, and heartily to Rejoyce in the Strength of our Salvation*.

Ver. 1.

And now, since God is so Great a God, and doth at all times manifest his Providential Care over us, To whom then shou'd we flee for Succour in Time of Need, but unto the Lord our Maker? The support and Anchor of the Soul, which no Storms can force away; whose Kingdom is not to be Shaken; neither can any thing Alter his gracious Promise to Save his Servants that Trust in him. *He wounds and He heals; He casts down, and raiseth up again; yea, He kills and makes alive*. This Consideration ought to beget in us an awful Dread and Reverence for his *All saving Name*, and cause us readily to own his Supreme Power at all times.

Neither is this Duty of Dependance upon God, only necessary to be practis'd by us, in regard that he is able to do all things of himself; But in regard also, That He hath made, and ordain'd Glorious Bodies in the upper Regions of the Universe; and has made all the Material World, in which are various and *Second Causes*, which God, when it pleaseth him, concurs with, and grants them Commission, either to Bless or Afflict the Earth: By them God sometimes thinks fit to rouse up and awaken Sinners, and he gives many sensible Tokens of his Presence; so that all they who will not be mindful of his Mercy, which he so liberally deals forth in the

the Earth, at the Voice of his Thunder shall be afraid, when God (as of late) by surprizing Instances of his Power, commands an acknowledgment of it, which some even dare to question, and boldly to deny. But however others presume to Treat God and his Providence after a most shameful and loose Manner; yet let us esteem it both our Duty and Interest to honour and respect God according to his Excellency and Power; That we may not at any time be liable to receive the Portion of the Wicked, which is very terrible; according as we find it related by David in these words,—God shall Rain *Psal. 11. 6.* Snares (Plagues) Fire and Brimstone, and an horrible Tempest upon the Wicked: this shall be the portion of their Cup.

How do the Sins and Provocations of a Sinful and Rebellious People, oftentimes provoke God to punish a Nation, and to dash one Creature in pieces against another, and to create Confusion in this World? And 'tis a Melancholy convincing Token, that God's Wrath is kindled in good earnest, when he is forced, as it were, by his severe Punishments, to extort from us an Acknowledgment of his Providence.

The Earth Shook lately (as of old it is recorded to do in the Prophet's words) and trembled; the foundations *Psal. 18. 7.* also of the Hills mov'd, and were shaken, because God was Wrath. There went up a Smoak out of his Nostrils, and Fire out of his Mouth devoured: Coals were kindl'd by it.

He bow'd the Heavens also and came down, and Darkness was under his Feet. *Ver. 9.*

And He rode upon a Cherub, and did flie: yea, He did flie upon the Wings of the Wind. *Ver. 10.*

In this Terrible Manner God has been many times known to Execute Judgments in the Earth; and by Concurring with Second Causes, and Impowering of them to fulfil his righteous Commandments, to call back Sinners to Repentance, and to try the Faith and Patience of the Righteous. And this leads me to C 2 2. The

2. The Second Duty which obligeth us at this time in particular; which is this: That when God is pleas'd, either by himself, or to Concur with *Second Causes*, enabling them to punish us with the fiercest Execution of his Wrath here below, We take it patiently, and not Murmur against God. And here, the Examples of former Times, in the patient Sufferings of better Men than we are, may help and assist us in the performance of this so necessary and Religious a Duty. In this Book of *Psalms*, we meet with many Instances of *David's* patient bearing, not only those Miseries and Sorrows which God more immediately sent him from Heaven himself, but those also which by the Administration of *Second Causes* befell him often, and cruelly handled and afflicted him.

Jan. 5. 11.

Job 1.

*Ver. 19, 20,
21.*

We have not only heard, saith the Apostle, of the Patience of Job, but you may find a large account of it, in that Book which carries his Name: In the beginning of it we meet with a very sorrowful and afflicting Instance of Providence, which befel that holy and Great Man, and it is in this Day very Applicable to our present Considerations, now we are met together in so solemn a manner; where we understand, that Job's last and greatest Affliction, proceeded from a Terrible Wind, which threw down the House, and Kill'd all his Sons and Daughters: An Affliction, that needs must carry along with it Lamentation and Great Weeping; such as constantly attends upon Tender Parents, whilst Fathers and Mothers sorrowfully sigh for their Children, and Mourn, and will not easily be Comforted, because they are not; because they are Dead, and for ever in this World hid from their Eyes. Yet all this unspeakable Sorrow Job carried with wonderful Submission, and Resignation of himself to God.

It is certain, That Murmuring and Railing at Heaven for Misfortunes that happen unto Men, doth not be-

become any that profess Christianity; neither doth it alleviate our Miseries, but rather cause God to Chastise us more Severely. In natural Diseases, 'tis observable, that the more restless and unquiet we behave our selves under them, the more our Misery increaseth, and our Recovery is render'd more Dangerous: Whereas by Patience, a skilful Physician's Prescriptions, by the Blessing of God take place, and the threatening Malignity of the Disease soon abates; and is quickly remov'd: A quiet and submissive Behaviour under any sort of Pain, be it never so Sharp and Discomposing, will make it less grievous, by taking the Mind off from continual complaining, and preventing a Man from applying all his Thoughts to the Anguish and Misery of his present, and sorrowful Condition.

In like manner 'tis dangerous for us in our *Spiritual Sickneses sent us from Heaven*, to Murmur and Complain: *God is the Great and best Physician of Souls*; and for ought we know, *these bitter Trials*, which we now lie under, may be Salutary, and 'prove (as the most unpalatable Physick to Natural Bodies) healing Medicines, and the Souls speedy Restoratives.

God's Power is Sovereign and whatever He enacts and determines, shall come to pass, it is our Duty to receive, and quietly Submit our Selves to him, that Knoweth and Judgeth what is best for us. Tho' our God is known to be a *gracious God, and Father, who Created us all*; yet he never will Indulge us so far, as to grant us such a *Toleration*, that we may pursue what seems most to gratifie and please our Carnal Imaginations, in squaring and modelling out a Government here below, as we think fit, and as we wou'd have it. *Our Thoughts are not God's Thoughts, neither (as He declares) are our Ways his Ways*: And be our pretence what it will, and our Appeals to Conscience never so loud

loud and importunate, yet will not God allow us the *Destructive Liberty of Doing that which is Lawful and Right in our own Eyes*; and of interposing in the least with his Almighty Authority and Providence: But God will so far extend and maintain both, that he will exercise *Mercy and Judgment* according to his own good Pleasure. Let our Lot then be what it pleaseth God to send, it is our Duty to attribute the whole Disposal of it to Him: *He is the Lord, let him do as he pleaseth; his Will, not our Will be done.* †

But after all, will not some say, "That there is a particular Power belonging to Inferior Beings, by Virtue of which They may, and often do Mischief to this lower World; and therefore they think it no Crime to Murmur and Curse the Authors of their Misery? *The Devil is*, by St. Peter, describ'd, as a *Roaring Lion, going to and fro in the Earth, seeking whom he may Devour*; and he hath his Infernal Agents to assist him in carrying on the Enlargement of his Kingdom of Hell and Darknes. Again, St. Paul stiles him, *The Prince of the Power of the Air*, from whence some hastily conclude, That he, and his Ministers of Darknes can do what Mischief they please in the Earth, by Raising of Storms and Tempests, and hurling about the most dreadful Meteors, to affright and Plague both Man and Beast.

'Tis not denied, but that the Devil and his *Associators, Solemn Leaguers and Covenanters*, have a large and Usurp'd Dominion; and when the *Christian Religion* first began to dawn and appear in the Earth, he had so Infatuated and blinded the Eyes of many deluded Wretches, *That seeing they could not perceive, nor by hearing understand*: By these Wiles and Stratagems the Devil had extended his Dominion very far, so that he was thence call'd, *The Prince of this World: To whose Altars the Gentiles*

1 Pet. 5. 8.

Eph. 2. 2.

Isa. 6. v. 9.

Joh. 12. 31.
14 30.

titles did Sacrifice : and many pompous Processions were made in Honour of him by the *Rebel Multitude*, that, in defiance to Christ and his Gospel adher'd to him; so that he is stiled, *The God of this World* also by St. Paul, in his Second Epistle to the *Corinthians*. Yet none of these high Appellations, and distinguishing Characters given to the Devil, do invest him with that uncontrollable Sovereignty and Power, which many vainly ascribe to him : For he is no more the God " of this " World, *than Baal was the God of his Devotees and " Worshippers ; Or the Onions and Leeks and Dogs, were " the Gods of the Egyptians*, in respect of that Homage " and Service which Idolaters, and Sinners perform " towards him. The Devil is call'd the God of this " World ; That Supreme Being, and no other, which " they seem to acknowledge and allow ; a *mere Phantom*, " and a God only framed by their Wild Fancies, and " most Superstitious Imaginations and Practices.

1 Cor. 10. 25

2 Cor. 4. 4

1 Kings 16.

ver. 31.

Numb. 11.

ver. 5.

Neither is the Devil at any time Stil'd *The Prince of the World*, in respect of any Independent Power and Authority, which he hath separate from God Almighty, *who was before the Creation, God blessed for ever* ; who hath set Bounds ; and a *Great Gulf is fixed*, which the Devil cannot pass himself ; *neither* (as Abraham tells the Rich Glutton which he saw afar off in Hell) *can any pass to us, that would come from thence*.

Rom 9 5.

Luk. 16.

ver. 26.

All the Power that Satan hath, is by permission ; and 'tis certain he can Range no further *than those Chains* will suffer him, which the Apostate Angels, (as St. Jude speaks) *which kept not their first Estate, are reserv'd in under everlasting darkness*.

Ver. 6.

We find in the Gospel of St. Matthew, Satan is call'd the Prince indeed of Devils, and he doth govern Legion, for they are many who are Listed under him : But none are Subject to this *Arch-Rebel*, except they first chuse

Caq 12.

Ver. 24 26.

Dark-

Cap. I. ver.
9, 10, 11, 12.

Mat. 8. ver.
31.

Mat. 4 v. 1.

Psal. 78. ver.
49.

Darkness rather than Light, and yield themselves up to his accursed Delusions, and Inchantments : And notwithstanding this *Prince of the Air*, so call'd, doth many times Revel in this Inferior Region, and his Instruments of Destruction are prepared to *Raise Storms*, and do Mischief, as in the forecited Case of *Holy Job and his children* ; Yet still he Acts only by Almighty God's Sufferance and Permission first obtain'd ; as it more at large appears by that which we find mention'd in the Book of *Job* : Which plainly shews , That tho' the Devil be never so Malicious, yet is he restrain'd, and cannot tempt us, till God gives way, and we are consign'd over to him : Neither can he touch any of *our Goods here, nor spoil our Substance, nor Kill our Cattle*, unless God permits him , as he did once to *enter into the Herd of Swine belonging to the faithless Gaderenes*.

When it pleas'd the Eternal Son of God to Submit himself to undergo in our Human Nature Temptations , the Devil we find, did not dare to assault him, *before Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the Wilderness to be Tempted*: When it was God's good Pleasure, *the Tempter came*, and not before : And as we are *Christs' very Members*, the Devil cannot Tempt or Injure us , except God leave us , and our Sins open the way first , and miserably expose us to the *Grand Enemy of Mankind*. It is thus evident, and clear, That God alone governs the World by his *Power and Providence* ; and that all Things in Heaven and Earth are Subservient to Him, and act as He determineth they should do : When He pleaseth, he sends forth *good Angels*, which minister glad Tidings : And when God, as heretofore, is provok'd by *Israel*, He casts upon them the fierceness of his Anger, Wrath, and Indignation and Trouble ; and all this by sending evil Angels among them.

It would be too tedious and melancholy a Reflection at this time, to call back to our remembrance those many Kingdoms and Constitutions of Government here on Earth, which have been totally subverted and broken in pieces for *their* *Rebellions and Sins*; when God has caus'd a swift Destruction to pass upon them, so as to lay them waste and desolate; and has put the insatiable and bloody Sword of Revenge into the hands of inveterate and profess'd Enemies; and made even *Usurpers, and the most wicked Princes to triumph more than Conquerors us'd to do, over a distress'd Nation and People*: The Eternal Purpose of our God's Secret Counsel are conceal'd and hid from us, whilst by Evil Instruments, and the most surprizing Judgments, he thinks fit to correct and punish us: Yet in the midst of all those Dangers and Sorrows, which more immediately encompass us about, and threaten us with Ruin and Destruction, this is matter of some consolation, That none of our Enemies can wound or harm us, without God's especial designation and permission.

When that *Lying Spirit* went forth to bring to pass the Fall of *Ahab, King of Israel*, we understand he could not enterprize the Bloody Work, which *Ahab's* Sin had brought on, before God sufferr'd him *to go and become a Lying Spirit in the Mouth of all Ahab's Prophets*.

1 Kings
22 chap.
V. 21, 22.

By reason of Sin God gives a Nation over to Punishment, and yet very unwillingly; For he hath no pleasure in the death and destruction of the Wicked: He would not have any perish, but that all might share in his merciful Deliverance and Protection, and be saved both here and hereafter.

Nor is God's Power and Providence only known, when Great and Terrible Judgments befall Mankind, but they are also discoverable and made manifest, when lesser Calamities than Blood and Slaughter, and a fearful Overthrow are brought upon the Stage of this World: Be the Misery great or little, which happeneth amongst the Inhabitants of the Earth, it comes by God's sole Power and Permission; for except the Lord please, no Evil can enter the City: Yea, shall there be Evil in the City, and the Lord hath not done it? Which

Amos 3.
V. 6.

intimates, That God is the great Arbitrator of things here below, and can by the several Instruments of his Power, either bless or punish the Earth, according to his good pleasure.

Wherefore then, let this Consideration keep us from murmuring and censuring, whenever worldly Misfortunes do happen; for it is vain presumption, you hear, for any one to attribute any Independent Authority and Power to the Devil, which is not first and originally appertaining to God: The Devil can cause no *Hurricane*, nor raise any *Tempest*; except God first give him Liberty, and a Commission to execute Wrath and Violence: What more vain and sinful, than for any one to think he quarrels not God, nor insults his Providence, when he murmurs at Afflictions which are sent, and curseth the *Prince of Darkness, the Devil*, as the sole Author of his Misery? Oh do but hearken and consider! *Be the Cloud of our Afflictions* never so full of Horror and Darkness, yet God, by virtue of his *Omnipresence*, may be in the *Cloud*; far be it then from us to approach too near it, especially with *murmuring and complaining*.

What tho' the *Calamity of the Tempest* continue to be still very great, yet let not any thoughts arise in us, but such as may help and assist us in the great and important Work we are now employ'd in, of *Fasting and Praying to God* for his Mercy and Deliverance. We are assured by the Psalmist, *That whatsoever the Lord pleas'd* (as in the Case of *Israel*) *that did he in Heaven and Earth, in the Seas and all deep places. He causeth Vapours to ascend from the ends of the Earth, he maketh Lightnings for the Rain: He bringeth the Wind out of his Treasuries;* out of those Secret Places where they are reserved; to signify, that God hath them solely at his Command; and if God lock up the Winds, the Earth will be quiet, be the Devil, and those in confederacy with him, never so resolutely bent to destroy us: If God but speak the Word, Satan must retire behind him: If he *arise and rebuke the Wind, and the Sea at this time*, there will be a Calm: And God grant there may be; for *the time is now come, that he have mercy upon us.*

Psal 135
Ver. 6, 7.

Matt. 16.
Ver. 23.
Matt 8.
Ver. 26.

Let it not so much as enter our thoughts, that the Devil's Power is so despotick and absolute, as to tempt us against our own Wills; for if we persevere in the exercise and practice of Holy Duties, *and resist him*, as we ought this *Jam. 4. 7.* Day, *he will flee from us.*

I need not tell you, That as long as you are in this World, you are exposed to Temptations, and in danger to be troubled on every side; daily experience teacheth you this: My Business therefore is, to exhort you in the meantime, *To humble your selves under the mighty hand of God*; and not to forget to bless and praise his Holy Name, that he *1 Pet. 5. Ver. 6.* has spared so many of his People from Destruction, that they may live and rehearse what great things God hath done in the World. Which is a Duty I come in the Third place to enforce, *viz.*

That when Judgments have been sent amongst us, which have destroy'd many Creatures in the Land, and in the Sea, we that in this Day survive, do never forget to bless the Name of God for our happy Deliverance. III.

In this World, where the Judgments of God are promiscuously sent and scatter'd abroad, it is rarely known, That all have escaped their Severity, but that more or less numbers of God's Creatures, have from time to time fallen and perish'd under them: And therefore the Calamities which befall others, should teach us so to estimate and value our own Safety and Preservation at all times, as to cause us to be thankful, and acknowledge that Providence of God, which alone rescu'd us from present Death. It is certain, that Deliverances from Eminent Dangers do at all times challenge our Publick Returns of Praise and Thanks; it being of the Lord's Mercies alone that we are left alive this Day, *thus to honour his holy Name and his Word.*

And since we are in Charity engaged to put the best Interpretations, and to speak well of the Dead, we will not therefore (as the manner of some is) rejoice at the Ruin

and Sorrows of our Distressed Brethren, and say, that they perished in the *late Storm and Tempest* for their own particular Sins and Offences: Tho' such terrible and surprizing Instances of Providence are generally the Portion of obstinate and persevering Offenders; yet none ought to be positive and judge rashly: For who (besides God) can discover and see the Secret Causes and Events of Things here below: And, for ought that we know, the *Godly and Upright* have met their *appointed Time*, and are taken away from more cruel Miseries which are yet for to come, and freed from that *Evil of Punishment*, which *even now very terribly threatneth us all, and lieth hard upon us.*

Isa. 57.
Ver. 1,

Such, we are inform'd, have been the Ways of Providence of old, when God complain'd by his Prophet; *That the Righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men (men of Kindness or Godliness) are taken away; none considering, that the Righteous is taken away from the Evil to come, or from that which is evil at present.*

Isa. 61.
Ver. 3.

The *Jews* who thus saw the Death of Good Men, were not so duly affected as they ought to have been, with those Severe Tokens of God's Wrath and Displeasure: They were so fast link'd in Sin, that they laid none of God's Judgments to heart, and thus they more and more provoked God to punish them. Wherefore then let us sanctifie this Appointed Fast, and by all the humble Instances of a Penitent People, let us manifest both to God and the World, that we are in earnest sorry for our Misdoings, and have an awful and deep sense of the Judgments which God has sent down upon this Nation: Then will the Lord have pleasure in our Religious Service this Day, and be soon inclin'd to *restore unto us Beauty for Ashes, the Oyl of Joy for Mourning, the Garment of Praise for the Spirit of Heaviness.*

Whether God hath lately taken away Good Men, or whether he hath slain the Wicked, it is our Duty, by many Thanksgivings to God, to bless his Name, for giving us warning by the Death of others, to fit and prepare our selves for our own Change.

If the Wicked, who have long despis'd God, and blasphemed his great Name, have been swept away: Oh! let us now praise God that our Lot was not with theirs, and that we are not number'd in the Grave with such Transgressors.

What a comfortable Consideration is it, that we are yet deliver'd from *Sudden Death*? which *Death*, even to the best of us all in this World, is certainly very terrible; and therefore we are taught to pray unto God to deliver us from it, in the *Litany of our Sacred Church*: And if Good Men pray to be deliver'd from *Sudden Death*; and tremble at the very thoughts of it, how dismal and wretched a Change may we then imagine it to be, when the Wicked are slain and buried by it? I do not mean *Sudden Death*, as 'tis barely the privation of Life and Motion; for as such, according to our present and natural apprehension, it is concluded to be the easiest Death, less wounding than that which is preceded with a long and lingring Sickness, and with variety of Diseases, and at last sinks and destroys Human Bodies.

But *Sudden Death* is terrible, when it strikes men so impetuously, that they have not time, either to ask Pardon of God or their Neighbour, for their former Sins, and Unjust Dealings: Such a deprivation of Life must needs be sad and terrible, whilst it immediately shuts up all in horrible Darkness, and hurries away the Soul into that *Eternity of Punishment*, which is the certain and promis'd Inheritance of all that die, and are killed violently in their Sins and Trespases.

Time and Space to repent and make Peace with God and the World, is so great a Mercy, that every one is concern'd to pray for it; *Since all have sinned and come short of the Glory of God.* We have still the Guilt of Adam's Sin imputed to us, and Original Corruption is inherent in our Frail Nature: The glorious Image of God, which at the Beginning was imprinted on Man, is defaced and sullied to that degree, that all those noble Lineaments which once represented Beauty and Perfection in the Creature, are by Sin obliterated, and in a manner blotted out; so that the *whole Creation groaneth and travelleth in pain*; and we ought to prize every

Rom. 3.
Ver. 23.

every Opportunity given to Mankind to repent them of their Sins. Oh! that we would in this *Day consider the things which make for our Peace, e're they be hid from our eyes*: It is good for us to grow wise betimes, and not only thus to recount the Miseries and Desolation which have happen'd of late, and to discourse of other Mens sad Misfortunes, but to take warning our selves by them; considering, *That as the Spirit of God bloweth where it listeth*, in this Sublunary Abode and Lottery of the World, and that God sends forth his Judgments *upon the Just and Unjust*, it might have been our Fate to have been taken away, and carried along with the Storm, and have perished in the *Earth or the Sea*, as many have done. *But God hath spared us; wherefore we will give Praise unto him that is alone worthy to be praised.* f - - -

John 3.
Ver. 8.

148.

Vid. Our
Rubrick.
Benedicite
omnia epe-
ra Domini.

To this Duty of Thanksgiving to God for remembering Mercy in the midst of Judgments, we are in this Psalm (as I have already observed to you) inform'd, that all the Works of God are exhorted and summon'd to attend upon it; "Angels, Heavens, Waters above the Firmament, Powers of the Lord, Sun and Moon, Stars of Heaven, Showers and Dew, Winds of God, Fire and Heat, Winter and Summer, Dews and Frosts, Frost and Cold, Ice and Snow, Nights and Days, Light and Darknes, Lightnings and Clouds, Earth, Mountains and Hills, all Green Things, Wells, Seas, Flouds, Whales, and all that move in the Waters, Fowls of the Air, Beasts and Cartel, Children of Men: These all are called to wait upon God, and to observe his Laws.

II.

From this Consideration therefore of God's Inferior Creatures *fulfilling his Commands*, as they are directed at all times, give me Leave (very briefly) to exhort you to the like Practice of Holy and Heavenly Obedience in all fuitable Opportunities, by doing of such things as God requires to be done.

What an Affectionate Concern was God himself pleas'd to expresse for the Obstinacy and Disobedience of *Judah*: when he

he appeal'd to the Heavens and Earth, and commanded their Attention, whilst he thus declared — *I have nourished and brought up Children, and they have rebelled against me.* It is very wounding, yea, it grieves the Righteous Spirit of God, to look down from the Throne of his Majesty in Heaven, and behold the Works of his own Hands, his Children by Adoption and Grace, violating his Laws, and breaking in upon his most Holy Sanctions and Ordinances; doing (in the Apostle's Phrase) *despite unto the Spirit of Grace.* Isa. 1. Ver. 2. Hebr. 10. Ver. 29.

Shall all Things in Nature besides Man, unhappy Man! be found to weigh heavier in the Balance before God, and afford more regular and due Instances of Obedience to their Maker?

O let not God complain any longer of us, nor prefer the very Brute Beast to us, for their Dutiful Carriage towards their respective Masters, whose Bounty and whose Crib they continually own. Isa. 1. Ver. 3.

Let it rather become our care and study to exceed Inferior Creatures in Duty and Gratitude to our Lord and Master in Heaven, as far as God hath placed us above them in the Work and Order of the Creation; when he endued Man (to whom he gave the Sacred Impress of his own Divine Similitude) with a Rational Soul, and all those noble Faculties of Mind, which might always enable him to look up unto God his Creator, and religiously teach him to observe his Commandments.

God is pleas'd, even before the Sons of Men, to applaud the Grateful Actions which the Ox and the Ass, and other Creatures do perform, who are only led by Instinct, and the Secret Impulse of Nature: And is not this, think ye, Shame and Dishonour enough for Rational Beings, To whom the Will of the Lord has been reveal'd, who know it, and yet do it not; who are continually fed at God's Hand, and yet remain careless and insensible of so much Mercy and Bounty bestowed upon them?

Let then this Consideration go from this Place along with you; and when you chance to see how Inferior Creatures (*your Sheep and your Oxen*) are ready to hearken to your Voice, and own you for their Masters: Think with your selves how much more you all stand obliged to acknowledge the *Power and Providence of God*, and only to direct your Prayers to him, your Great Master in Heaven, your Lord and your God.

To whom with God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be given all Honour and Glory, now and for evermore. Amen.

A P R A Y E R for the Afflicted who suffer'd in the Late S T O R M.

See the
Office for
the Fast-
Day.

O Almighty God, who delightest not to grieve the Children of Men, yet as a Wise and Gracious Father, dost chasten every Son whom Thou receivest, Behold with tender pity all those who have suffer'd by the late Publick Calamity, in Body, Estate, Friends, or Relations: Give them Patience and Submission to thy Holy Will: Let them not murmur or repine, seeing it was thy Doing, whose Judgments are always righteous, though they are a great depth; Be Thou the Comforter of those who are cast down, O thou God of Consolation, and make up their Temporal Losses by Spiritual Advantages, and by future Blessings of this World, as thou seest necessary or convenient for them; and so sanctifie to all of us both the Mercies and Judgments which Thou sendest, that at length we may be made happy in that Perfect State, which is not subject to Time or Chance; where we shall sin no more, be no more disquieted, and die no more, but enter into that Everlasting Rest, which thou hast promis'd, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

F I N I S.